

# Stories of our Māori Placenames

Teaching resource - 'Identity'

## OVERVIEW:

This unit explores the importance of *tapa whenua* (naming places) in Māori culture to record stories of important ancestors and events and to describe places. The language of our place names creates a striking snapshot of New Zealand's history.

## Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Interpret and discover the significance of our Māori place names in Aotearoa New Zealand
- Share stories of their own place names in a range of ways
- Develop knowledge and use of *te reo Māori* through the unit

## CONTENT

### 1. KŌRERO – STORYTELLING AND PLACENAMES



[Image source](#)

Māori place names tell stories of the ancestors and important events of the past. They helped to record history and legends before Māori was written down.

### 2. TE TAIAO – THE NATURAL WORLD AND PLACENAMES



*Haruru Falls on the Waitangi River – 'haruru' means big noise*

Māori place names often use natural features e.g. waterfalls and mountains to describe places and identify prominent landmarks – these were used like maps.

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## Curriculum Links

### Social Science:

- Place and Environment
- Continuity and Change

### Te Reo Māori - Te Whakatōtanga 1:

- Kōrero – speaking
- Mātakitaki – viewing
- Whakaatu – presenting

### Digital Technology:

- Designing and Developing Digital Outcomes
- Computational Thinking

### English:

- Making meaning
- Creating meaning

### The Arts:

- Understanding the Arts in Context
- Developing Ideas
- Communicating and Interpreting



This Māori place name tells a tale of romance

[Image source](#)

**Disclaimer:** Remember there are different versions of stories depending who tells it; also, some kupu may vary from area to area. Be aware of mamae and grief of whānau Māori about some place names lost after being renamed by Europeans. Not everyone who is Māori has deep understanding of te āo Māori so be mindful of the expectations you put on people.

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## CLASSROOM LEARNING

Note: 1) Kōrero and 2) Te Taiao are not necessarily two separate topics, they connect with one another with some overlap, so mix and match the order of activities from both as best suits your class. It will also depend on which placenames you explore. You can explore Māori names of towns, notable mountain peaks, lakes, marae locations, rivers, forests, suburbs and bays.

### 1- KŌRERO – STORYTELLING

Naming places was important to Māori to record significant events and ancestors from that area. They record the journeys of explorers, who landed there in their canoes from Hawaiiki and named places, sometimes to claim an area. The Northland ancestor Tōhē walked from Kapowairua Bay (Spirits Bay) to Maunganui Bluff north of Dargaville, naming more than 100 places. Each name tells a story or describes the place.

#### Class activities

- Research a local placename - or one from your wider area to discover the story and meaning behind it; you could arrange to meet with someone at your local marae to hear stories about place names in your area. Remember this can include mountain, lakes, marae locations, rivers, forests, suburbs and bays.
- If you like, you can share our special story about how Waitangi got its name! Here at Waitangi, we tell a special story from the Ngāti Rahiri people about Te Ana o Maikuku.

### *Te Ana o Maikuku (Maikuku's Cave)*



[Image source](#)

Te Ana o Maikuku is the original name for our beach here at Waitangi Treaty Grounds. It commemorates Maikuku, a chief's daughter renowned for her beauty. She was a puhi (a young woman kept sacred) and was sent to live apart from her people in a cave in the cliffs near the beach. A young man called Huatakaroa searched and searched for her. He was guided to her cave by the tangi (wailing), of a taniwha, a water spirit – which is one of the stories behind Waitangi (weeping waters): Wai (water) and tangi (wailing or weeping). The couple had a child, Te Rā, who became a famous ancestor of the Ngāpuhi hapū Ngāti Rāhiri.

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- Discuss elements of the placename of your own place or of Waitangi– who is it telling a story about? Why would this name be important to Ngāti Rāhiri people?
- Has your placename changed? Te Ana o Maikuku changed to Hobson Beach after Captain Hobson who arrived in his ship here to negotiate the Treaty with Māori. What effect do you think changing the name may have for different people?
- Does your placename include a natural feature? Does it tell a story? Often placenames do both. Waitangi has wai (water) describing the place and also tangi, for the story of Maikuku being found.

## Group activities:

- Choose different placenames to research; these may be from your area or an area you have connections to. Use the [Dual language map and Te Reo Māori Names](#) to research the original Māori names if they have been changed. Each group share their Māori placename and the story behind it.
- Research a placename using [1000 Māori Place Names](#) and share with other groups.
- Write the correct kupu Māori for the English words for natural features e.g. island/motu in the **Māori Placenames** table (see appendix). This links to and is included in 2. Te Taiao but is best done near the start of the unit to gain the vocabulary knowledge.
- Explore the Māori placenames for Aotearoa and the North and the South Island. What stories do these names tell? (Te Ika o Maui and Te Wai Pounamu). Share the stories behind these names.
- Find some interesting names and make up a story that you think they could tell e.g. Maunganui means big mountain – maybe something really important happened on that mountain.
- Retell the story through drama and present to the other groups.
- Have a group challenge to memorise the longest placename (see photo above). Each person in the group could learn part of it!

## Student activities:

- Design and create a landscape using paint, coloured pencils or collage; include natural features e.g. moana, awa, maunga, motu, whanga. Write labels on the picture or have separate kupu labels to place on different features. (See other ideas for this in Te Taiao student activities).
- Design a digital landscape, using [Paint 3D](#) (Windows 10 only) or [AutoDraw](#). Download these instructions [Get started with Paint 3D](#). Add labels for the natural features.
- Choose a Māori placename or use one the class has explored already. Retell it in different ways; through drawing, writing, a song or poem.
- Recreate a story or legend such as Te Ika o Maui or any other placename you have explored, using animation programmes such as [Cloud Stop Motion](#) or [Scratch](#). Download instructions: [Getting started with Cloud Stop Motion](#). Watch this video [Introducing Scratch](#).
- Create a presentation on Māori placenames in poster form or using [Google Slides](#) – this may about the importance of them in general or about a few placenames in particular.

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## CLASSROOM LEARNING

### 2- TE TAIAO – THE NATURAL WORLD

Māori often named places after features of the landscape, such as motu (island), maunga (mountain), whanga (harbour) and awa (river). Other descriptive words were added e.g nui (big), roa (wide or long). Students will become familiar with kupu Māori for these features and use them to interpret and discover the meaning of our Māori place names, both present and past.

#### Class activities:

- Investigate your local placename and those of your area. Remember your placename today may not be the original name; investigate whether it had a Māori name before it was renamed after the arrival of the Europeans. Use this interactive map which gives the options of a [Dual language map and Te Reo Māori Names](#).
- Discuss any geographical features that are part of the names. Your place name may not include these; it may tell a story. The main point is that students understand that Māori place names describe places and tell stories. If your place name does not include natural features, use some well-known places as examples e.g. [Rotorua](#) - Roto: lake; rua: two, or second.
- Explore Māori placenames with this [interactive map](#) which shows which areas have more Māori place names, for example Māori names dominate the North Island outside of Auckland and Wellington. Discuss why.

#### Group activities

- Write the correct Māori kupu for the English word for natural features e.g island/motu in the **Māori Placenames** table (see appendix). Use this online [Māori dictionary](#).
- Discuss the completed lists, and practice saying kupu Māori.
- Turn the list into flashcards and use as a matching activity/memory game.
- Discover some place names that use these kupu on the [Dual language map and Te Reo Māori Names](#) and [1000 Māori Place Names](#).
- Use the above two resources to find other commonly used kupu that make up our Māori place names; find more words and add to the list.

#### Student activities

- Design and create a landscape using paint, coloured pencils or collage; include natural features e.g. moana, awa, maunga, motu, whanga. Write labels on the picture or have separate kupu labels to place on different features.
- Create a folded booklet showing different natural features as above or use [Book Creator](#). [Download instructions here](#) and watch this [Video tutorial](#).
- Design a digital landscape, using [Paint 3D](#) (Windows 10 only) or [AutoDraw](#). Download these instructions [Get started with Paint 3D](#). Add labels for the natural features.
- Use [Scratch](#) to code a landscape story where your sprite shares Māori kupu for different features e.g. *He awa tēnei* – this is a river.
- Use a map of Aotearoa and look at different areas. Use your kupu Māori to 'rename' a place with a new name that you think describes it. It may be the shape that reminds you of something or a natural landmark. Have fun and be creative 'renaming' places using kupu Māori.

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## APPENDIX

### MĀORI PLACENAMES

Find kupu Māori for the English words and fill in below. Add to the list as you explore placenames.

English	Māori
bay/harbour	
beach/sand	
big/great	
cave	
coast/tide	
headland	
hill	
island	
lake	
land	
little	
long	
mountain	
path	
river	
sea	
sky	
spring	
stream	
water	

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## Websites and Links

### Interactive maps to explore:

<https://insights.nzherald.co.nz/article/our-place-names/>

<https://www.andrewdc.co.nz/2018/03/13/te-reo-maori-map-of-aotearoa-new-zealand/>

<https://tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/rauemi-a-ipurangi/rauemi/aotearoa-map/>

<https://reomaori.co.nz/assets/Resources/2012/fb61bac55d/Aotearoa-Map.pdf>

### Other useful sites:

<https://teara.govt.nz/en/tapa-whenua-naming-places>

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/maori-language-week/1000-maori-place-names>

<https://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/assets/Resources/2013/e64f2af1d5/Place-Names.pdf>

<https://tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/assets/Resources/2013/39d9523ffc/Aotearoa-Map.pdf>

<https://www.rarangamatihiko.com/>

<https://maoridictionary.co.nz/>

## Digital Tools, Instructions and Tutorials

### Book Creator

Website: <https://bookcreator.com/>

Instructions: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1yqHXphOeUJhcNALTiRL8UZfgmVYG4Sb3>

Video Tutorial: [https://drive.google.com/open?id=1A1oc23sqhCoq\\_6IKJ8Chf690JAnBrc-](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1A1oc23sqhCoq_6IKJ8Chf690JAnBrc-)

### Cloud Stop Motion

Website: <https://cloudstopmotion.com/>

Instructions: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aeDBgEC7laRbtqRVkWFIRS2DyGlgUrnS/view?usp=sharing>

Video Tutorial: <https://youtu.be/pJIUYd2BhwQ>

### Scratch

Website: <https://scratch.mit.edu/>

Video Tutorial: <https://youtu.be/NTY7jAODNqM>

Coding Challenge: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yVDjIF2pozGRCIDNwvbpMstMg0ZhWdw/view?usp=sharing>

### Paint 3D

Website: <https://paint-3d.en.softonic.com/>

Instructions: <https://www.rarangamatihiko.com/resources/getting-started-with-paint-3d>

### AutoDraw

Website: <https://www.autodraw.com/>

Instructions: <https://experiments.withgoogle.com/autodraw>